

Thou confort of us wrecches, do me endite  
Thy maydens deeth, that wan thurgh hire merite  
The eterneel lyf, and of the feend victorie,  
As man may after reden in hire storie.

Thow mayde and mooder, doghter of thy sone,  
Thow welle of mercy, synful soules cure,  
In whom that God, for bountee, chees to wone,  
Thow humble, and heigh over every creature,  
Thow nobledest so ferforth oure nature,  
That no desdeyn the Makere hadde of kynde,  
His sone in blood and flessch to clothe and wynde.

Withinne the cloistre blisful of thy sydis  
Took mannes shap the eterneel love and pees,  
That of the tryne compas lord and gyde is,  
Whom erthe, and see, and hevne, out of relees,  
Ay heryen; and thou, virgine wemmelees,  
Baar of thy body, and dweltest mayden pure,  
The creatour of every creature.

Assembled is in thee magnificence,  
With mercy, goodnesse, and with swich pitee,  
That thou, that art the sonne of excellence,  
Nat oonly helpst hem that preyen thee,  
But often tyme, of thy benygnytee,  
ful frely, er that men thyn help biseche,  
Thou goost biforn, and art hir lyves leche.

**N**OW help, thow meeke and blisful faire  
mayde,  
Me, flemed wrecche, in this desert of galle;  
Thynk on the womman Cananee, that sayde  
That whelpes eten somme of the crommes alle  
That from hir lordes table been yfalle;  
And though that I, unworthy sone of Eve,  
Be synful, yet accepte my bileve.

And, for that feith is deed withouten werkis,  
So for to werken yif me wit and space,  
That I be quit fro thennes that moost derk is.  
O thou, that art so fair and ful of grace,  
Be myn advocat in that heighe place  
Theras withouten ende is songe Osanne,  
Thow Cristes mooder, doghter deere of Anne!

And of thy light my soule in prison lighte,  
That troubled is by the contagioun  
Of my body, and also by the wighte  
Of erthely lust and fals affeccoun;  
O havene of refut, O salvacioun  
Of hem that been in sorwe and in distresse,  
Now help, for to my werk I wol me dresse!

Yet preye I yow that reden that I write,  
foryeve me, that I do no diligence  
This ilke storie subtilly to endite;  
for bothe have I the wordes and sentence  
Of hym that at the seintes reverence  
The storie wroot, and folwen hire legende,  
I pray yow that ye wole my werk amende.

*Interpretacio nominis Cecilie, quam ponit frater  
Jacobus Januensis in Legenda Aurea.*

**F**IRST wolde I yow the name of  
Seinte Cecilie  
Expowne, as men may in hir  
storie see,  
It is to seye in Englishsh Hevene  
lilie,

for pure chaastnesse of virginitee;  
Or, for she whitenesse hadde of honestee,  
And grene of conscience, and of good fame  
The soote savour, Lilie was hir name;

Or Cecile is to seye The wey to blynde,  
for she ensample was by good techynge;  
Or elles Cecile, as I writen fynde,  
Is joyned, by a manere conjoynynge  
Of Hevene and Lia, and heere, in figurynge,  
The Hevene is set for thought of hoolynesse,  
And Lia for hire lastynge bisynesse.

Cecile may eek be seyde in this manere;  
Wantynge of blyndnesse, for hir grete light  
Of sapience, and for hire thewes cleere;  
Or elles, loo! this maydens name bright  
Of Hevene and Leos comth, for which by right  
Men myghte hire wel, The hevne of peple, calle,  
Ensamble of goode and wise werkes alle,

for, Leos, Peple in Englishsh is to seye,  
And right as men may in the hevne see  
The sonne and moone and sterres every weye,  
Right so men goostly, in this mayden free,  
Seyen of feith the magnanymytee,  
And eek the cleernesse hool of sapience,  
And sondry werkes, brighte of excellence.

And right so as thise philosophres write  
That hevne is swift and round & eek brennyng,  
Right so was faire Cecilie the white  
ful swift and bisy evere in good werkyng,  
And round and hool in good perseveryng,  
And brennyng evere in charite ful brighte;  
Now have I yow declared what she highte.  
**Explicit.**

BEERE BIGYNNETH THE SECONDE NONNES TALE OF THE  
LYF OF SEINTE CECILE

**T**HIS mayden bright  
Cecile, as hir lif seith,  
Was comen of Ro-  
mayns, & of noble kynde,  
And from hir cradel up  
fostred in the feith  
Of Crist, and bar his  
gospel in hir mynde;  
She nevere cessed, as I  
writen fynde,  
Of hir preyere, and God to love and drede,  
Bisckynge hym to kepe hir maydenhede.

And when this mayden sholde unto a man  
wedded be, that was ful yong of age,  
Whiche that yeloped was Valerian,  
And day was comen of hir mariage,  
She, ful devout and humble in hire corage,  
Under hir robe of gold, that sat ful faire,  
hadde next hire flessch yclad hire in an haire.

And whil the orgues maden melodie,  
To God allone in herte thus sang she:  
O Lord, my soule and eek my body gye  
Unwemmed, lest that I confounded be;  
And, for his love that deyde upon a tree,  
Every seconde or thridde day she faste,  
Ay biddynge in hire orisons ful faste.

The nyght cam, and to bedde moste she gon  
With hire housbonde, as ofte is the manere,  
And prively to hym she seyde anon,  
O sweete and wel-biloved spouse deere,  
Cher is a conseil, and ye wolde it heere,  
Whiche that right fayn I wolde unto yow seye,  
So that ye swere ye shul me nat biwreye.

Valerian gan faste unto hire swere  
That for no cas, ne thyng that myghte be,  
he sholde neveremo biwreyn here;  
And thanne at erst to hym thus seyde she:  
I have an aungel which that loveth me,  
That with greet love, wherso I wake or  
sleepe,  
Is redy ay my body for to kepe.

And if that he may feelen, out of drede,  
That ye me touche or love in vileynye,  
he right anon wol sle yow with the dede,  
And in youre yowthe thus ye sholden dye;  
And if that ye in clene love me gye,  
he wol yow loven as me, for youre clenness,  
And shewen yow his joye and his brightnesse.

Valerian, corrected as God wolde,  
Answerde agayn, If I shal trusten thee  
Lat me that aungel se, and hym biholde;  
And if that it a verray angel bee,  
Thanne wol I doon as thou hast prayed me;

And if thou love another man, forsothe,  
Right with this swerd thanne wol I sle yow  
bothe.

**C**ECILE answerde anon right in this  
wise:  
If that yow list, the angel shul ye see,  
So that ye trowe on Crist, and yow baptize.  
Gooth forth to Via Apia, quod shee,  
That fro this toun ne stant but miles three,  
And, to the povre folkes that ther dwelle  
sey hem right thus, as that I shal yow telle.

Tell hem that I, Cecile, yow to hem sente,  
To shewen yow the goode Urban the olde,  
for secree thynges, and for good entente.  
And when that ye Seint Urban han biholde,  
Telle hym the wordes whiche I to yow tolde;  
And when that he hath purged yow fro synne,  
Thanne shul ye se that angel, er ye twynne.

**V**ALERIAN is to the place ygon,  
And right as hym was taught by  
his lernynge,  
He foond this hooly olde Urban  
anon,  
Among the seintes buryeles  
lotynge.

And he anon, withouten tarynge,  
Dide his message; and when that he it tolde,  
Urban for joye his handes gan upholde;

The teeris from his eyen leet he falle:  
Almyghty Lord! O Jhesu Crist, quod he,  
Sower of chast conseil, hierde of us alle,  
The fruyt of thilke seed of chastitee  
That thou hast sowe in Cecile, taak to thee!  
Lo, lyk a bisy bee, withouten gile,  
Thee serveth ay thyn owene thral Cecile!

for thilke spouse, that she took right now  
ful lyk a fiers leoun, she sendeth heere,  
As meke as evere was any lamb, to yow.  
And with that word, anon ther gan appere  
An oold man, clad in white clothes cleere,  
That hadde a book with lettre of gold in  
honde,  
And gan biforn Valerian to stonde.

Valerian as deed fil down for drede  
Whan he hym saugh, & he up hente hym tho,  
And on his book right thus he gan to rede:  
Oo Lord, oo feith, oo God, withouten mo;  
Oo Cristendom, and fader of alle also,  
Aboven alle, and over al everywhere,  
Thise wordes al with gold ywriten were.

Whan this was rad, thanne seyde this olde  
man,  
Leevestow this thyng or no? Sey ye or nay.